



Autochthony, Migration, and the Politics of Belonging: Rethinking the Northwest-Southwest Divide in Anglophone Cameroon

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Abstract: The Northwest/Southwest divide in Anglophone Cameroon represents one of the most enduring and politically consequential intra-regional cleavages in the country's postcolonial history. While both regions share a common Anglo-Saxon colonial heritage and a collective experience of marginalization within a Francophone dominated state, their internal relationship has been shaped by competing claims to autochthony, demographic anxieties, and elite-driven narratives of belonging. This article examines the historical, socio-anthropological, and political foundations of the divide, focusing on the emergence and evolution of the derogatory label *cam-no-go* as a symbol of exclusion directed at Northwestern migrants in the Southwest region. Drawing on theories of autochthony, migration, and identity politics, the study traces the roots of the conflict to colonial labor migration, plantation capitalism, and the political rivalries of the 1950s and 1990s. It argues that the Northwest/Southwest dichotomy is not merely cultural but structurally produced through state policies, elite manipulation, and demographic pressures. The article concludes that the politics of belonging continues to undermine Anglophone solidarity, with significant implications for the ongoing Anglophone Crisis and prospects for collective self-determination.

Keywords: Anglophone Cameroon; autochthony; allochthony, migration; Northwest–Southwest divide; *cam-no-go*; identity politics; belonging; plantation economy; political anthropology; self-determination.

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Introduction

The Anglophone regions of Cameroon (Northwest and Southwest) occupy a unique position in the country's political and socio-cultural landscape. Despite sharing a common colonial history under British administration and a collective experience within a Francophone-dominated state and now struggling for self-determination, the two regions have long been divided by competing claims to belonging, identity, and political representation. This internal fracture, often expressed through the derogatory slogan *cam-no-go*, has shaped inter-regional relations for decades and continues to influence the trajectory of the Anglophone Crisis.

The paradox of Anglophone identity lies in the coexistence of unity and fragmentation. On one hand, Anglophones collectively articulate grievances related to political exclusion, cultural

assimilation, and constitutional betrayal. On the other hand, the Northwest–Southwest divide reveals deep-seated tensions rooted in historical migration patterns, land disputes, elite competition, and divergent political loyalties. These tensions challenge the assumption of a cohesive Anglophone community and complicate efforts towards collective mobilization for self-determination.

The term *cam-no-go*, originally a Pidgin English expression for a persistent skin disease, has evolved into a powerful symbol of exclusion directed at Northwestern migrants and indeed Northwesterners perceived as “strangers” in the Southwest Region. Its usage reflects broader anxieties about demographic dominance, economic competition, and cultural difference. More importantly, it illustrates how autochthony discourses claims of being “sons of the soil” have been mobilized to police boundaries of belonging and justify exclusionary practices.



This article seeks to unpack the historical and political processes that produced the Northwest and Southwest, particularly in the context of the anglophone crisis, situating it within broader African debates on autochthony, migration, and identity politics. It argues that the divide is not a natural or inevitable outcome of cultural difference but a socially constructed phenomenon shaped by colonial labour policies, postcolonial state strategies, and elite manipulation. By examining the evolution of the *cam-no-go* discourse and its implications for Anglophone solidarity, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how internal fractures undermine collective struggles for autonomy.

The analysis proceeds in several stages. First, it provides a historical overview of migration and settlement patterns that shaped early relations between Northwesterners and Southwesterners. Second, it outlines the theoretical frameworks of autochthony and belonging that inform the study. Third, it reviews existing literature on the Northwest and Southwest divide and situates the phenomenon within broader African patterns of indigene stranger dynamics. Fourth, it examines the political instrumentalization of the divide during key historical moments, including the 1950s nationalist struggles and the 1990s era of political liberalization. Finally, it discusses the implications of these dynamics for the ongoing Anglophone Crisis.

Through this multi-layered analysis, the article demonstrates that the politics of belonging in Anglophone Cameroon is deeply intertwined with historical grievances, demographic pressures, and elite interests. Understanding these dynamics is essential for any meaningful attempt to address the Anglophone Problem and envision a future political arrangement that acknowledges both shared identity and internal diversity.

1. Background or Historical Context

Tensions between the autochthons and allochthons are most likely to arise when stranger ethno-regional groups appear to occupy a dominant position in indigenous land. This assertion is true in the case of Northwest and Southwest divide in Anglophone Cameroon. Thus, understanding the Northwest and Southwest divide requires a historical reconstruction of the processes that shaped inter-regional relations long before the emergence of the *cam-no-go* discourse. The roots of the divide lie in the colonial encounter, the plantation economy, and the demographic transformations that accompanied labour migration in the 20th century.

1.1. German Colonial Rule and the Early Foundations of Mobility

During the German Kamerun era (1884–1916), the colonial administration initiated forced labour recruitment and infrastructural projects that encouraged population movements across the territory. They built roads and railways primarily to access raw materials (cocoa, rubber, coffee, etc.) and link to the coast, not for internal integration, creating fragmented connectivity. Also, the focus on resource extraction meant that some areas, particularly those linked to key economic zones, developed differently from others, creating spatial inequalities and subsequent migration to developed and industrial areas. In addition, German governance was top-down, consolidating power, sometimes suppressing local entities (Chiefs/Fondoms), and imposing new administrative structures, some of which were non-indigenes, creating resentment and resistance (Konings 1993:69;

1999:80). Again, due to late entry and limited resources, German rule was relatively brief (30 years) and geographically limited, failing to fully integrate diverse regions or build lasting national institutions. Although the German period did not produce a clear Northwest/Southwest divide, it laid the groundwork for later migration patterns by establishing plantation zones along the coast and administrative centers in the hinterlands (Ardener, 1962; Nkwi, 2017). The coastal areas, that is, today's Southwest region became sites of economic extraction, while the Grassfields, that is, today's Northwest served as labour reservoirs.

1.2. British Colonial Administration and the Plantation Economy

The British period (1916–1961) intensified these dynamics. The establishment of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) and the PAMOL plantations created a massive demand for labour. Grassfields migrants from the Northwest, known for their agricultural skills and strong work ethic, became the dominant labour force in these estates (Konings, 1993). By the 1940s and 1950s, Northwesterners constituted the majority of plantation workers, traders, and artisans in the coastal region, especially after the departure of foreign nationals particularly from Nigeria (Delancy 1973). We are not unaware of the fact that it is a common tendency among humans who perceive themselves to have a common identity to come together against a perceived enemy. Once the enemy is defeated, conflict begins within. Thus, as the social distance between Nigerian and Cameroonian workers in the estates diminished, (Delancy 1973) a new potential source of friction occurred, that is, between the indigenous Southwestern minority and Northwestern majority, first in the estates then in the entire region..

This demographic shift planted the seeds of resentment among indigenous coastal groups, who perceived the influx of Northwestern migrants as a threat to land ownership, cultural autonomy, and political influence (Gwan, 1975). Yet, during this period, relations remained largely cooperative, as both groups united against Nigerian dominance in the estates and shared grievances under British neglect. Piet Konings highlights the turning point in the relationship between the people of the two regions in the following words:

While relations between Southwestern and Northwestern workers appear to be more or less peaceful, relations between Southwestern and Northwestern managers was marked by fierce conflicts caused by the persistent attempts of the Southwestern managerial minority to establish control over agro-industrial enterprises located in 'their' region...the effects of labour mobility on the relations between autochthons Southwesterners and allochthons Northwesterners in local communities in the Southwest appear to have been more dramatic (Konings 2001:176).

1.3. Nationalist Politics and the Birth of Regional Rivalries

The late 1950s marked a turning point in the relationship between the Northwesterners and the Southwesterners. Political competition between John Ngu Foncha (Northwest) and Emmanuel Endeley (Southwest) polarised the regions. After the KNC victory in the 1954 election and with E.M.L Endeley's ascent to power as the first Prime Minister of Southern Cameroons, he rejected entirely the idea of reunification used to gain Southern Cameroons quasi-autonomy from Nigeria. This action, Martin Nzeuma says infuriated the members of

the UPC who supported reunification to the core. They were thus determined to create an indigenous party in Southern Cameroons with reunificationists' sympathies (Njeuma 1995:27–37). In 1955 Dr. J. Ngu Foncha, leading a substantial faction of KNC members, broke away from KNC to create the KNDP- bringing back reunification onto the platform of Mainstream West Cameroon politics. In what most Southwesterners today called betrayal from a best friend. Nicolas Awasom gives a picture of the dichotomy between the Northwest and Southwest regions reflected in the political antagonism between Foncha and Endeley thus:

UPC, having noticed the chagrin that reunification was on the decline under Endeley's KNC, decided to form a pro-reunification indigenous party by using reunificationist sympathizers in Endeley's KNC Party to revive and sustain the unification idea. The UPC, therefore, founded the KNDP in James Quandie's house at Three Corners Fiango Kumba in May 1955. John Ngu Foncha was singled out as an influential member of the KNC with reunificationists sympathies. He was approached, convinced, and whisked off overnight to Kumba, where definitive arrangements were made for the launching of KNDP with him as president of the party (Awasom 2000:100).

Such nocturnal arrangements orchestrated by UPC and consented to by Foncha could only breed tension and promote discord between Endeley (SW) and Foncha (NW). Thus from 1955 through the UN organised plebiscite in 1961 and independence, Endeley and Foncha were political rivals and co-opted their ethnic groups or regions in their political antagonism (Nfi 2012:58–70). The plebiscite campaigns of 1959–1961 deepened these divisions, as each leader mobilized ethnic and regional identities to secure political support (Awasom, 2000). The Northwest largely supported reunification with French Cameroon, while the Southwest favoured integration with Nigeria. This political divergence created lasting mistrust between the two regions, shaping their interactions in the post-colonial era. The Northwest and Southwest dichotomy during the period before and immediately after independence is summarized in three headings: Plebiscite campaign speeches, plebiscite results, and request for partitioning of Southern Cameroons.

1.4. Post-Reunification Centralization and the Rise of Autochthony

After reunification in 1961, the federal arrangement that guaranteed autonomy to West Cameroon (the Anglophone state) was gradually dismantled. The 1972 referendum abolished federalism, and the 1984 constitutional amendment symbolically erased the federal heritage by renaming the country "La République du Cameroun," the pre-1961 name of French Cameroon (Ngoh, 2004).

These centralising policies intensified Anglophone grievances but also exacerbated internal tensions. As Northwesterners continued migrating to the Southwest in large numbers, demographic pressures, land scarcity, and economic competition fueled resentment among indigenous groups. By the 1990s, these tensions erupted into open hostility, culminating in the popularisation of the *cam-no-go* label.

2. Theoretical Framework

This article draws on three interrelated theoretical frameworks, namely; autochthony, migration and identity formation and political instrumentalization of belonging.

2.1. Autochthony and the Politics of Belonging

Autochthony claims of being "sons of the soil" has become a powerful political discourse in Africa, especially since the 1990s wave of democratization (Ceuppens & Geschiere, 2005). Peter Geschiere paints it better in the following words:

In 1990, many parts of Africa South of the Sahara embraced a new political dynamic. There was an unprecedented drive towards political and economic liberalization, including threats to evict most African dictators, sparked by a general call for democratization and the consequent rebirth of multi-party politics. Political kleptocrats responded by engendering and intensifying the struggle over belonging and forms of exclusion among their citizens. Some were branded "natives," while others were called "strangers", even if they were citizens of the same country. Although this undermined the very notion of national citizenship, which most regimes in Africa had upheld in the early 1960s and 1970s, using unity as a precondition for nation building (Geschiere, 2004: 12).

Autochthony and the Politics of Belonging are characterized by a desire to distinguish "true natives" from "strangers", flexible and often exclusionary definition of belonging and a tendency to emerge during periods of political competition or economic scarcity.

In Cameroon, autochthony has been used to justify exclusionary practices in land allocation, political representation, and access to state resources (Socpa, 2003). The *cam-no-go* discourse fits squarely within this framework, as it labels Northwesterners as perpetual outsiders regardless of their length of residence.

2.2. Migration and Identity Formation

Migration reshapes identities by creating new social boundaries between hosts and settlers (Barth, 1969). In the Southwest Region, the influx of Northwesterners altered demographic balances and triggered anxieties about cultural erosion and political marginalization. Walters Nkwi highlights how the influx of Northwesterners changed dynamics in relationship between the two regions. According to him,

While most migrant workers in the Southwest Region initially returned to their region of origin after a short-term period of work on the plantations, an increasing number of Northwesterners decided to settle in the Southwest region after retirement. These settlers were joined by fellow members of their ethnic group who wanted to grow food or cash crops on the fertile lands in the region, or to become artisans, traders, or employees in local and government enterprises (Nkwi 2017:138).

To the above, Gwan Emmanuel Achu adds that in some of the coastal districts like Fako and Ndian Divisions, the local population almost became overwhelmed by these strangers (Emmanuel Achu Gwan 1975). He underlined that initially Northwesterners were welcomed by the local Southwest population and given land almost free of charge, thus becoming more or less incorporated into the land-giving lineage. They were usually expected to provide only a small payment in kind as a token of acknowledgment and appreciation to the landlords (Emmanuel Achu Gwan 1975). However, with the passage of time, the local population could no longer bear the pressure over the limited land

especially as it soon became evident that the local tenure system could not cope with the increasing flow of 'strangers', and, that local institutions, in particular, chieftaincy, mostly a colonial invention (Geschiere 1993) was too weak to enforce the existing norms and rules regarding land issues. The system simply collapsed. Sales of land (building and agricultural land) quickly developed in those areas with large stranger concentrations (Meek 1957; Fisiy 1992)). The resulting unprincipled access to land degenerated into numerous land disputes, especially in Fako Division, where land shortages rapidly developed. Repeated Northwestern migrants engaged in land disputes with the indigenous landowners.

These dynamics align with theories of: Boundary maintenance, stranger-indigene dichotomies and ethno-regional competition (Eyoh, 1998). The Northwest and Southwest divide is thus a product of both material competition and symbolic struggles over identity.

2.3. Elite Instrumentalization of Identity

Political elites often manipulate identity narratives to consolidate power, mobilize support, or weaken opponents (Posner, 2005). In Cameroon, Southwest elites used *cam-no-go* rhetoric to resist perceived Northwest domination, while Northwest elites framed themselves as victims of exclusion. The antagonism between the people of the two regions was not only limited to socio-cultural differences, it also took on a political dimension. As on the estates, the indigenous population, often instigated by regional politicians (Amazee 1990:281–93; Kleis 1975), directed its anger at the settlers whom they claimed had come to dominate the regional administration, trade and land. The Southwest elite quickly disseminated perception of an increasing political domination of the Northwesterners at regional and national level since the end of the 1950s. In fact, from the mid-1950s onwards nationalist leaders in Southern Cameroons became increasingly divided. The Northwest-Southwest divide continued with Southwesterners feeling dominated in their own land by Northwesterners and in an attempt to destroy Northwestern domination in the 1960s, the Southwesterners formed VIKUMA, the propagated Victoria-Kumba-Mamfe Alliance. The Southwest elite's resentment of the continuing Northwestern domination in their region after the abolition of the federal state is reflected in their struggle for control over CDC, PAMOL and other sectors of public and private service (Konings 1996, 1997).

The dissension between the two groups continued in the period of economic and political liberalisation in the early 1990s. In fact, according to Piet Konings, political liberalisation fanned the rivalry between Southwest and Northwest elites in their struggle for power at regional and national levels. He emphasised that out of fear of renewed Northwest domination, the Southwest Elite Association (SWELA), Southwest Chiefs Conference (SCC) and Southwest politicians especially members of the Cameroon People Democratic Movement (CPDM); the ruling party, tried to stimulate Southwest identity even to the extent of inciting autochthonous southern population against allegedly dominant and exploitative northwestern strangers or settlers calling them all sorts of names: *graffies, uncivilized and dirty, ruthless land grabbers, ingrates, exploiters, parasites, traitors and come-no-go*. The Northwesterners in turn called Southwesterners *lazy fellows, hedonists, people with weak culture* (Konings 1996, 1997: 207).

It should be noted that the Francophone-dominated state of Cameroon took advantage of the division to weaken Anglophone unity. This instrumentalization is central to understanding why the divide persists despite shared Anglophone grievances.

3. Literature Review

The Northwest/Southwest divide has attracted significant scholarly attention across anthropology, sociology, political science, and history. The literature can be grouped into four major themes.

3.1. Colonial Legacies and Divergent Identities

A fundamental question often asked by most researcher on Autochthonous discourse is: why is obsession with autochthony mostly in countries that experienced western colonization. And in the African context Africa, "why do political confrontations often wear "premordialist clothing"? (Fratani 2004). The construction of ethnicity and or ethnic identity by the colonial state in Africa" is usually the first answer given to autochthon obsession and politics of belonging. Anthropologists, Sociologists, and Historians have shown through varied ways (ethnography and scientific studies) how western colonisers subjected the local population to a system of administration that was entirely alien. Colonialism displaced the long-established indigenous systems and territories, introduced and subjected the local population to a system they claimed was better, just to weaken them, tear them apart, then have access to cheap labour, their raw materials, to mentally and materially subject them to a permanent state of dependency. Indigenous encounter with colonizers gave rise to what Talal Asad terms the "Conversion Process" (Asad 1996)

This conversion process entailed movements of people, change of land tenure systems, introduction of new administration, destruction of cultures just to name a few. This "profound displacement" and categorization of Africans (Territorially and Administratively) cannot be grasped by mere tracing of the origins of the amalgamation of the colonised, that is, mixing of different cultures and persons albeit Africans, accompanied by a new system of categorization by the colonizers (Asad 1996) When groups of people begin to identify themselves and to ask for public representation, questions like 'who are you', 'where are you from' to prove authentic identity political contestation of 'consciousness' become inevitable (Asad 1996). Marshall-Fratani, Ruth argues that colonial administration itself was built on race difference (primordial categories); namely white colonisers seen as superiors and black colonised viewed as inferiors. The most powerful and overwhelming form of categorization is 'primordial' whose fundamental logic is one of biological; race/ethnicity (Fratani 2006). The cases of Rwanda, Burundi, Hausa-Fulani and other crises in Africa present striking examples of conflicts emerging from a superior/inferior tribal source introduced by the colonizers. For the French colonial administration for example, some indigenes were seen as autochthons, whereas others were definitely not (Arnaut 2004). French policy during the colonial era was to bypass indigenous chiefs especially those they perceived troublesome in favour of homogeneous districts, populated by the same people. Hence, ruling immigrant groups had to be distinguished from true autochthons. This system of administration could not but form the seeds of autochthonous discourses in Africa. Although the French administration during the postcolonial resorted to involving local chiefs in the administration of the new colonies the harm had been done. (Suret-Canale 1964).

In the case of anglophone Cameroon, scholars such as Ardener (1962), Kofele-Kale (1987), and Nkwi (2017) highlight how colonial labor policies and administrative structures shaped early inter-regional relations. The plantation economy created a structural dependence on migrant labor, while British indirect rule reinforced ethnic and regional identities.

3.2. Migration, Land, and Economic Competition

Konings (1993, 1997, 2001) provides the most comprehensive analysis of how migration patterns fueled tensions in the Southwest. He documents, land disputes between indigenous groups and Northwestern settlers, the collapse of traditional land tenure systems, and the rise of resentment toward perceived “Northwest expansionism.” Fisiy (1992) and Gwan (1975) similarly emphasize the role of land scarcity and demographic pressure.

3.3. Autochthony and Identity Politics

Geschiere (2009), Ceuppens & Geschiere (2005), and Socpa (2003) situate the Northwest and Southwest divide within broader African patterns of autochthony. They argue that democratization and economic crisis in the 1990s intensified exclusionary discourses, leading to the stigmatization of “strangers.”

3.4. Anglophone Nationalism and Internal Fragmentation

Konings & Nyamnjoh (2003), Awasom (2000), and Fonchingong (2013) examine how internal divisions have weakened Anglophone mobilisation. They note that, elite rivalries date back to the 1950s, the 1990s saw renewed polarization, the Anglophone Crisis has both united and divided the regions. This literature underscores the paradox of Anglophone identity: unity against external domination coexists with deep internal fractures.

4. Data Presentation

Although this article does not rely on primary fieldwork, it synthesises a wide range of historical, anthropological, and political data from existing scholarship. The data presented here fall into three categories: Historical demographic patterns, documented land and labor disputes, and political events that shaped identity narratives.

4.1. Demographic Patterns and Migration Flows

Historical records indicate that by the 1940s, Northwesterners constituted the majority of laborers in the CDC and PAMOL plantations (Konings, 1993). Their presence increased steadily through the 1950s and 1960s as the plantation economy expanded. By the 1980s, Northwesterners had become the dominant migrant population in Fako, Ndian, and Meme Divisions, with some estimates suggesting they made up more than 60% of the non-indigenous population in certain localities (Nkwi, 2017).

This demographic shift created a perception among indigenous Southwesterners that they were being “overrun” by strangers, a sentiment that would later fuel the *cam-no-go* discourse.

4.2. Land Disputes and Tenure Transformations

Archival and ethnographic data show that early relations between migrants and hosts were cooperative. Indigenous groups often granted land to Northwesterners in exchange for symbolic payments or labour contributions (Gwan, 1975). However, as migrant populations grew, the customary land tenure system became strained. Chiefs and lineage heads, unable to regulate land

allocations effectively, increasingly resorted to land sales, leading to, overlapping land claims, boundary disputes, accusations of land grabbing and breakdown of traditional authority. Fisiy (1992) documents numerous court cases in Fako Division involving disputes between indigenous landowners and Northwestern settlers, illustrating the growing tensions.

4.3. Political Events and Identity Narratives

Several political events contributed to the crystallisation of the Northwest and Southwest divide. Between 1955–1961, the Foncha–Endeley rivalry polarized the regions along political lines. The abolition of federalism intensified Anglophone grievances but also heightened internal competition for limited state resources all happened in 1972. Political liberalisation revived regional associations such as SWELA and NOWEFU, which mobilised autochthony narratives took place in the 1990s. Precisely in 1994, the *cam-no-go* slogan gained prominence during anti-Northwest campaigns in Buea. These events demonstrate how political actors have repeatedly instrumentalised identity to consolidate power.

5. Analysis

The data presented above reveal a complex interplay of historical, economic, and political factors that produced and sustained the Northwest–Southwest divide. This section analyses these dynamics through the theoretical lenses outlined earlier.

5.1. Autochthony as a Response to Demographic Anxiety

The rise of autochthony discourses in the Southwest Region can be understood as a reaction to demographic changes. As Northwesterners became numerically dominant in key urban and rural areas, indigenous groups developed a “siege mentality” (Konings, 1997). The *cam-no-go* label served as a symbolic boundary marker, distinguishing “true sons of the soil” from “intruders.”

This aligns with Geschiere’s (2009) argument that autochthony emerges most forcefully when communities feel threatened by demographic or economic pressures.

5.2. Migration and the Construction of Social Boundaries

Migration did not simply bring people into contact; it created new social categories. Northwesterners were perceived as: Hardworking but domineering, economically successful but culturally alien, loyal to their home region rather than their place of residence. These perceptions reinforced the stranger–indigene dichotomy. Barth’s (1969) theory of boundary maintenance helps explain how these categories persisted despite intermarriage, shared language (Pidgin English), and common religious affiliations.

5.3. Elite Manipulation and the Politicization of Identity

Political elites played a central role in transforming socio-economic tensions into political antagonism. During the 1990s, Southwest elites used the *cam-no-go* discourse to mobilise support against perceived Northwest domination in regional politics. They portrayed Northwesterners as exploiters of land, dominant in trade and administration and disrespectful of local customs. This narrative served to consolidate elite power while diverting attention from broader issues of state marginalisation.

5.4. The Paradox of Anglophone Identity

We must begin by acknowledging that prior to the Northwest and Southwest dichotomy expressed by the slogan *cam-no-go* in the

1990s, there had been few serious clashes between strangers and indigenous groups in the region. Firstly, the dominant position of Eastern Nigerian workers on the CDC and PAMOL estates after the Second World War gave rise to serious frictions between autochthonous Anglophone Cameroonian workers and Eastern Nigerian strangers. With nationalist mindset, between 1947-1960, Southern Cameroonian workers (Northwesterners and Southwesterners) in CDC and PAMOL launched a series of collective and informal actions aimed at removing Igbo and Ibibio supervisory staff and management in the corporations (Konings 1993:69; 1999:80). They made repeated calls to the government and management of those corporations to 'Camerounaise' labour force and management staff recruitment in the corporations.

Southwestern and Northwestern workers in the estates and elsewhere in the Southwest Coastal/forest region lived and worked together peacefully (Ardener, Ardener, and Warmington 1960; Delancy 1973; Kofele-Kale 1987; Konings 1993, 1999). Southern Cameroonians often organised themselves as an ethnic and inter-ethnic basis as witnessed in membership of existing churches and trade unions. They often engaged in common struggles against managerial control and exploitation of workers and foreign domination in Southern Cameroons.

Talking about the background relationship between Highland/Grasslander migrants from the Northwest region and their hosts, the Coastal/Forest Southwesterners and beginning of the conflict albeit not fierce, Walters Gam Nkwi beautifully paints the picture thus:

The numerical superiority of the Bamenda Grassfielder migrants determined their relationship with their hosts especially in the plantation area. The plantations in particular have attracted a lot of labour migrants from the Bamenda Grassfields over time and space. The Bamenda Grassfielders were the overall majority migrant population in the plantation regions. From the beginning the migrants and host relationships were cordial between the southwest minority and Northwest majority. Both groups exercised a high level of cordiality in inter-ethnic relations encapsulated in the membership of churches and trade unions. They also coordinated to fight any form of labour exploitation like the CDC workers strike in the 1940s. The government policy and church to promote a multiethnic state helped in cementing relations between the Bamenda Grassfields migrants and their host. Their language which is Pidgin English, a lingua franca of creole origin helped in keeping the two groups together. These 'horse-riding' relations did not go on *sine die*. The effects of this labour mobility on the Southwest region seem to have been dramatic (Nkwi 2017:138).

Although there exists the dichotomy between the two regions, the irony in the relationship is that beginning especially after the dismantling of the federal system and the introduction of a unitary state in 1972, Anglophone Cameroonians as a people (Southwest and Northwest regions) have been struggling for autonomy (a return to the federal system or outright sovereignty). This struggle reached its zenith first in the early 1990s then later with the mobilisation of lawyers, teachers, and students in October 2016, which saw a brutal and violent response from the government, with the arrest and imprisonment of activists. Since then, there has been rising pressure by the Anglophones for full-fledged autonomy and or outright secession.

Despite their internal divisions, Northwesterners and Southwesterners share, a common colonial history, a shared experience of marginalisation and similar grievances regarding assimilation and political exclusion.

5.4.1. A Common Colonial History

We have seen already that the country today called Cameroon (French and English Cameroon) was a West African colony of the German Empire (1884 to 1916). With the defeat of the Germans in the First World War, Cameroon was partitioned into Britain and France. Northwest and Southwest regions; former Southern Cameroons, now Anglophone Cameroon was a British colony – trust territory (1916-1961). At independence, this formed a country with French Cameroon called the Federal Republic and later the United Republic and now the Republic of Cameroon. Today, Anglophone Cameroonians are defined as those whose political and colonial ancestral line is connected to the former British Southern Cameroons (Tassing, 2018).

5.4.2. A shared experience of marginalization

Northwest and Southwest regions; former Southern Cameroons, now Anglophone Cameroon, do not only have a common colonial history but a shared experience of marginalisation, assimilation, domination and systematic destruction of the Anglo-Saxon culture by the French dominated government of Cameroon. Talking about the causes of the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon, the members of the All-Anglophone Conference that held in Buea lamented:

We have been disenfranchised, marginalized, and treated with suspicion. Our interests have been disregarded. Our participation in national life has been limited to non-essential functions. Our natural resources have been ruthlessly exploited without any benefit accruing to our territory or its people. The development of our territory has been negligible and confined to areas that directly or indirectly benefit Francophones. Through maneuvers and manipulations, we have been reduced from partners of equal status in the Union to the status of a subjugated people (Fonchingong 2013:226; AAC, 1993).

Marginalisation of Northwest and Southwest regions is seen in the socio-economic and political sphere of the country. Piet Konings and Francis Nyamnjoh intimate that the quest or struggle for Anglophone self-determination is nothing other than the result of accumulated instances of continuous manifestation of attempts to erase the Anglophone colonial identity, language and culture in Cameroon (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997:207–29). These have similar grievances regarding assimilation and political exclusion.

5.4.3. Similar grievances regarding assimilation and political exclusion

Political inequality, marginalisation, assimilation and exclusion can be seen in the underrepresentation of Northwest and Southwest in key government positions and other services. For instance, out of the 67 government members, only three Anglophones occupy high-level cabinet positions (Ndille 2019). Roland Ndille speaks of a history of exclusion of Anglophones from the most important government and official political party positions, and a feeling of being relegated to merely deputy roles to Francophones (Ndille 2019; Ettangondop 2004)

The marginalisation of Anglophone Cameroon also exists in the socio-cultural life. Kofele-Kale describes the current tied

centralisation system in Cameroon as ‘Gallicising of public life,’ (Kofele-Kale 1987:135–69) referring to the pre-eminence of French as the primary language and of inherited French institutions and bureaucratic practices in all aspects of state administration and public life, particularly in Anglophone territory (Nyamnjoh and Konings 2004:193). There is also the centralisation of power, with decision-making solely centered in Yaoundé, far from Anglophone regions.

Economic marginalisation began when Southern Cameroons lost its currency with reunification; the pound sterling was replaced by the French Cameroon CFA franc. In 1964, the metric system replaced the imperial system of weights and measures (Awosom 2020:264–91). The French-dominated government is also accused of exploiting Southern Cameroon resources without commensurate regional development. The proceeds, for example from oil resources in the Southwest (anglophone region) have never been reinvested in the area and all directors of SONARA have consistently been Francophones. Until 1989, oil royalties were paid to the Douala treasury. To date, Limbe and Ndian divisions, from where oil is exploited, do not benefit from income taxes levied by SONARA workers because their salaries are computerised in Douala. (Kum 2017). The government is also accused of having caused the closure of small-scale enterprises in Anglophone regions, such as the West Cameroon Development Authority, the Cameroon Bank, POWERCAM, and the Cocoa and Coffee Marketing Board, to name a few (Awosom 2020:264–91). Furthermore, the closure of the Tiko, Bisongabang, and Bali airports; Tiko Wharf; the Santa Coffee Estate; the Yoke Power Station; the Tiko, Victoria, and Mamfe sea/riverports; (Toh 2001), and the Victoria Deep Seaport all in favor of the permanent dredged Douala Seaport (Toh 2001) and the “present government’s slow pace or seeming indifference in restituting them” have been used to justify the assimilation of Southern Cameroons into the larger French Cameroon territory (Elong Eboho 2014:148–62). According to Cameroon’s 2017 public investment budget, the French-speaking South Region alone was allocated far more resources (over 570 projects with over \$225 million) than the two English-speaking Northwest Regions combined (more than 500 projects with over \$76 million) and Southwest region (over 500 projects with over \$77 million) put together (Kum 2017).

Yet, the NW/SW divide persists because identity is not solely shaped by external pressures but also by internal dynamics. The paradox lies in the fact that Anglophones are united by oppression but divided by belonging.

5.5. Structural Factors Sustaining the Divide

Several structural factors continue to reinforce divide in Cameroon's North West (NW) and South West (SW) regions. These stem from the distinct British colonial heritage, leading to feelings of marginalization by the French-dominated central government, manifested as political exclusion, economic disparities (e.g., oil revenue control), and cultural clashes over language and institutions, all exacerbated by a poorly managed reunification process, suppression of protests, and ongoing conflict that further entrenches these divisions. Below is a breakdown of the key structural factors:

5.5.1. Land scarcity in the Southwest

While land scarcity isn't the primary driver for the continues Northwest and Southwest divide in Cameroon (Konings 2003:31–56), issues around land access, ownership, and large-scale

plantations in the South West region of Cameroon significantly fueled the ongoing Anglophone Crisis, exacerbating the Northwest-Southwest divide by creating economic grievances, disempowering locals, and sparking conflict over resource control, contributing to the marginalisation felt by Anglophones alongside other factors like political exclusion. The government’s favoring of multinational companies for agro-industrial projects over local farmers’ land rights created deep resentment, linking land issues to broader demands for representation. Piet Konings explains that an anglophone private press some years ago, which initially was meant to encourage anglophone identity and solidarity was later split along Southwest- Northwest lines (Konings 2003:31–56). The number of attacks, commentaries, opinions, and reports related to Northwest and Southwest divide in the papers was indicative of the degree of the divide (Konings and Nyamnjoh 2000:5–31).

5.5.2. Economic disparities between the regions

Economic disparities significantly fuel the Northwest-Southwest (NWSW) divide in Cameroon, stemming from historical marginalisation, exclusion from the public sector, and the ongoing conflict’s devastating impact on livelihoods, infrastructure, education, and key sectors like agriculture, making these regions poorer and exacerbating grievances over unequal development and resource access, despite their inherent potential.

5.5.3. Political competition for limited state resources

Political competition for limited state resources significantly fuels the Northwest-Southwest (Anglophone) divide in Cameroon, stemming from historical marginalisation, centralised power, and elites vying for control, leading to grievances, secessionist movements (like Ambazonia), and violent conflict over perceived neglect in development, education, and governance, with a long-standing struggle for power and equitable resource distribution.

5.5.4. Weak local governance and corruption in land administration

weak local governance and land administration, corruption significantly fuel the Northwest and Southwest divide in Cameroon by creating deep-seated grievances over unequal resource access, tenure insecurity, and marginalisation, exacerbating existing socio-political tensions and fueling conflict, as corrupt practices favour elites and disregard customary rights, leaving locals vulnerable. This systemic breakdown undermines trust in state institutions and fuels separatist sentiment, turning land disputes into broader political struggles, especially where centralised, top-down land policies clash with traditional systems.

5.5.5. State exploitation of regional rivalries

We are not talking here about the government’s role as one of the political game players, at least not directly, but through some policies and laws. In light of the above, Nyamnjoh and Rowlands, like Peter Geschiere and Gugler state: “*Political liberation was transformed into an effervescence of a new type of politics of belonging often explicitly encouraged by the regime of President Paul Biya*”. (Geschiere and Gugler 1998:330; Nyamnjoh and Rowlands 1998:325)

To begin with, the series of new laws enacted in the 1990s, the successive electoral laws. For voting eligibility, one had to show proof of six months continuous residence in a given locality to qualify him/her to vote there, and to stand for elections in that locality, one had to be indigene or a “long-staying resident”

(Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2001:159–90). Geschiere and Nyamnjoh indicate that other requirements not explicitly formulated in the law, but invoked by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation (MINATD) makes the government both player and umpire in the field of politics of belonging, autochthonous discourses, and exclusion of “strangers” (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2001:159–90). Over and above all it is said that the 1996 constitution gave a pat on the back for the upsurge of autochthony, particularly in favour of indigenous ethnic groups against allochthonous domination. The preamble and article 57, 3 of the 1996 constitution for example mentions in clear terms the state’s obligation to protect minorities and preserve the rights of indigenous populations. (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2001:159–90). These factors ensure that the Northwest and Southwest divide remains a persistent feature of Anglophone politics.

6. Discussion

The Northwest–Southwest divide is not an accidental or superficial phenomenon; it is deeply embedded in the historical, economic, and political fabric of Anglophone Cameroon. The *cam-no-go* discourse reflects broader anxieties about belonging, identity, and power.

6.1. Implications for Anglophone Solidarity

The divide undermines efforts to build a unified Anglophone front capable of negotiating with the central government. The disunity among Anglophone Cameroon’s political elites in the few years before independence contributed significantly to the Anglophone problem. The years 1959, 1960, and 1961 were years when major decisions regarding the future of the territory were taken. Unfortunately, these were years of fierce divisions among Southern Cameroon Politicians. Having failed to arrive at a common position regarding the future of the territory, a two-option question was imposed on it by the UN. Even at the level of the plebiscite questions there was division among the reunificationists, specifically between Foncha and party members like A.N. Jua¹ who wanted secession and independence (Johnson 1970). While the KNDP executive stood for independence, Foncha, its leader is said to have wavered between independence and reunification (Ngho 2011).²

¹ A.N Jua one of the top most ranking KNDP members arguing in support of secession and independence said that if a country like the Gambia with a population of 250.000 people could be considered a political entity in its own right, why should Southern Cameroons with a larger population not be considered a separate political entity (Mamfe Conference, 1959: 10-12)

² Victor Ngho goes further to state that the wobbling in position of the part of the leaders of the KNDP party against the official position is responsible for why there was tension in the party later in 1959 when Foncha eventually conceded to the UN imposed reunification as one of the options for independence. Moreover, The disagreement first within the KNDP, then the tension between KNDP and KNC over the question of reunification and integration, above all the lack of a single thunderous voice regarding the future of Southern Cameroons in Mamfe led Sir Sydney to consider South Cameroons unfit for self-determination: thus, it was concluded that she could only gain independence by either integration with Nigeria or reunification with Republic of Cameroon (Ngho 2011)

6.1.1. Armed groups became regionally fragmented

The enthusiasm among Anglophones for self-determination was very high at the start of the anglophone crisis. There was the creation of several associations, the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society and Ad Hoc Committee to dialogue with the government on a number of demands,³ calls for ghost towns, school boycotts in the Southwest and Northwest regions (cameroon-info.net, 17 Jan 2017). However, a few months and years later, the enthusiasm diminished especially after the arrest of the leaders of the Consortium on the 17th January 2017. The spirit was further dampened by the continuous school closures, intensification of operation ghost towns, introduction of Anglophone secessionist fighters (Amba Boys) and their atrocities; burning of government buildings and houses of pro-government anglophone elites, burning of shops in markets and non-market places, burning of vehicles and a dozen schools and other institutions for not observing Monday ghost towns (“country Sundays”), kidnapping for ransom, turbulent detention and killing of innocent civilians, extortions and a generally tense atmosphere in all of Anglophone territory caused by the Ambazonian fighters (“the boys or amba boys”) and the government military. These violent incidents in the Northwest and Southwest did not only fuel the government’s strategy of demonising the Anglophone campaign, but affected the relationship between Anglophones at home (Northwest and Southwest) and equally in the diaspora as most Southwesterners accused Northwesterners of being responsible for the atrocities caused in the Southwest.

6.1.2. Diaspora factions promoted competing political visions

Like we said earlier, a great majority of Anglophone diaspora supported the protest movement when it started but today, some have reacted in a hostile manner to calls for secession and to the movement as a whole, to the extent of sometimes writing to the authorities of the countries where the leading exponents of secessionist are living to call for their expulsion.⁴ (Email from Benjamin Akih to the Belgian deputy prime minister and security and interior minister, consulted by Crisis Group, 24 May 2017) Even within secessionists, divergences persist about strategy and operational methods. Some support prioritising diplomatic offensives, while others argue it is only by use of the argument of force such as “Operation Ghost Town” militia that they can achieve their goal. Differences about the use of violence are intensified by rivalries and the struggle for power. Since March 2017, several small violent groups have been formed on ground zero (Anglophone Cameroon). This division has seriously affected the relationship particularly between the people of the Northwest and Southwest regions because Northwesterners are accused of

³ There were 21 demands and these demands were exclusively linked to the education sector. The other four covered issues such as the release of people arrested during the demonstrations, the adoption of an equitable five-year development plan and federalism. “Grève des enseignants Anglophones le professeur Ghogomu met fin à sa mission”, cameroon-info.net, 17 January 2017

⁴ The role of Mr. Mark Bareta, a Belgian resident, in ongoing destabilization of Cameroon”, email from Benjamin Akih to the Belgian deputy prime minister and security and interior minister, consulted by Crisis Group, 24 May 2017.

insisting on the argument of force and perpetuation of violence in the Southwest.

6.1.3. Local elites revived autochthony narratives

This fragmentation weakens the legitimacy and effectiveness of Anglophone political movements. The Anglophone Crisis tried with some success *ad initio* to go beyond old ethnic and regional divisions, partly because several members of the Consortium and leaders of protest movements were Southerners. (International Crisis Group 2017). However, this was short-lived. At the end of January 2017, the traditional chiefs of the Northwest Region wrote to the president of the Republic requesting that he unconditionally releases prisoners of the Anglophone crisis. The traditional leaders of the Southwest Region on the contrary sent a motion of support to the president. They called on Southwest youths to desist from disorder caused by Northerners in the name of independence. (Mutation newspaper, 17 Feb 2017). Again, in July 2018, Christian Cardinal Tumi, former Archbishop of Douala, three Protestant Pastors and Muslim leaders convened an Anglophone General Conference to give an opportunity for the various Anglophone actors to try and reach an agreement on the questions of the future of Anglophone Cameroon. Also, who would represent the Anglophones at the advent of any dialogue? The first major opposition came from the Southwest Region even before the government disapproved the idea. In a caption entitled: *Patrick Ekema Esunge: Cameroon Mayor marched to stop 'secessionists' activities and promised hell for should AGC hold in Buea*, Leocadia Bongben of BBC News Pidgin, Cameroon reports that Ekema, in a protest march at the Buea independence square, told secessionists to leave Buea alone; he promised bloodshed should Anglophone General Conference AGC hold in Buea, calling it Cardinal Tumi, and the Northwest idea. He asked that it be held in Bamenda, not Buea.

Although federalism was the preferred form of State for anglophones at the advent of Anglophone nationalism in the 1990s and at the beginning of the Anglophone crisis, the debate on the shape of the federation has been a major division between Northwesterners and Southwesterners. Some have argued in favor of a two-state federation as before unification, others four or six-state federation to better reflect the sociological composition of the country and make federalism acceptable to Francophones, or ten states to copy the current pattern of Cameroon's ten regions. Most Anglophone Northwesterners favour a two-state federation, while the Southwest elites and some indigenous groups tend to prefer a ten-state federation to avoid the demographic, political, and economic domination and monopolisation of their lands by Northwesterners. The Bakweri, Bafaw, and Bakossi people in particular would prefer to form a federation with the Coastal Sawas (the Douala) rather than with the *Graffis* of Northwest region (Visions and Nwenfor 2019). Other Southwesterners prefer a two-state federation with a further federation within the two regions of the Anglophone federated state (Kah 2012).

The various federation options are proposed because of the difficulties of the two regions living together. The late Fon Victor Mukete, Paramount Chief of Kumba and of the Bafaws did not hide his feelings about the difficulties of Southwesterners living with Northwesterners to form a political entity during the National Dialogue when he underscored that it was because Southwest Coastal/Forest people could not agree with Northwest Grass/Highlanders socio-politically and economically that "they", the Southwest elite, campaigned and voted overwhelmingly for the

dismantling of the federal system in favor of a unitary system in 1972. He maintained that any political arrangement that suggests Northwesterners and Southwesterners work together as an entity has failed even before it takes off (Visions and Nwenfor 2019).

6.2. The Role of the State in Perpetuating Division

The Francophone-dominated state has historically exploited the Northwest and Southwest divide to weaken Anglophone mobilisation. Strategies include. Favoring Southwest elites to counter Northwest influence, favoring Southwest elites to counter Northwest influence, manipulating land and administrative boundaries and encouraging regionalist rhetoric (Sama 2007:198). In light of the above, Konings and Nyamnjoh point out thus: *The Francophone-dominated government of Cameroon has always taken advantage of socio-cultural differences between the two regions to destroy any attempt on the part of Anglophones to form a united front and claim their right.* (Konings and Nyamnjoh 2004: 200). This divide-and-rule approach mirrors colonial strategies and contributes to the persistence of internal fractures.

The Southwest and Northwest intellectuals and political elite, including the Chiefs Conferences, are both fueling the suspicion by their preaching of the difference loud and clear through the creation of regional associations and groups that defend regional interest instead of Anglophone Cameroon interest. It should be noted that politicians from both regions are also exploiting the situation for their political gains (Konings and Nyamnjoh 2004). Today, other than labour migration and settlement, scramble for land and natural resources, the growing divide between the Southwest and Northwest elite, political manipulations by political elites and the government, socio-cultural differences have all contributed to the upsurge of autochthony and growing antagonism between the people of the two regions.

6.3. Prospects for Reconciliation

Ethnic, regional or other conflicts often arise as a result of refusal to acknowledge the problem; denial of access to basic human needs, identity differences, denial of legitimate autonomy, security and equality, compounded by autocratic rules, divide and rule policies by government and the military. The bases therefore of any reconciliation working towards peace, peace that promotes reconciliation and coexistence on the basis of human rights, social, economic and political justice. Reconciliation requires addressing both structural and symbolic dimensions of the divide:

6.3.1. Recognising the historical grievances of both groups

Talking about the solution to Northwest and Southwest divide is the acknowledgement that there exist the Northwest and Southwest antagonism. Sam Ekontang underscored that acknowledging that there is so much division within the Anglophones and that efforts made to build a united front have often been met with stiff resistance should be the first step to reconciliation for unity between the Northwest and Southwest regions. In the light of the above, Henry Kah gives the opinion of Professor Ndive Kofele Kale who acknowledging negative perceptions and grievances between the Northwest and Southwest paid attention on areas of common understanding and cooperation rather than differences. Among other things said:

Professor Ndive Kofele Kale has also prescribed a remedy to the schism between the Northwest and Southwest. In his opinion the first thing is to acknowledge the existence of any perceptions and grievances. After that, the two people should examine those things that bring them together and

emphasize them. To concretize matters. Kale advised that all the Anglophone political parties should come together, insist on a common platform and on some of the issues that are uniquely Anglophone (Kah 2012:98).

Acknowledging that the Coastal/Forest Southwest and Grassland/Highland Regions are socio-culturally different and therefore will look at reality and react to situations differently should be the first step towards Northwest and Southwest unity. Generally, Grasslanders/Highlanders are drawn to reacting violently to disputes/situations more than Coastal/Forest people as seen in the many tribal wars recorded in the area in the course of history (Arrah 2016; Konings and Nyamnjoh 2003; Masquelier 1993:443–58; Nkwi 1986).

6.3.2. Reforming land tenure systems

We remember that sources of prejudice, discrimination and exclusion are often rooted in particular historical, socio-cultural and political contexts, and shaped by institutional structures and practices. Seeking redress, above all, seeking to change individuals without dealing with these influences, or without engaging specific issues that shape intergroup relations, is often futile. Any institution, policy, association (cultural or regional) that seek to undermine and infringe on the rights of citizens of the same country to settle in any part of the country should be dealt with squarely. Tribal and regional associations, traditional, religious and elite association in both Northwest and Southwest regions should be cautious on what they write and say about each other.

Again, no one can deny that peaceful ethnic relations involve the creation of opportunities for positive equal status and interaction among people from different groups. This is often most effective when groups and institutions are organised so as to ensure that people from different backgrounds contribute equally to the task involved, especially members of the place where the institution is established. It becomes therefore a grave social injustice to have an institution in a particular region where members of the region are not part of the decision-making organ even if they were not heads of such institutions. It will be difficult therefore for Southwest and Northwest antagonism to come to an end if Northwesterners continue to gain control over groups and institutions (socio-economic, political and religious) in the Southwest without a reciprocal chance, a matter of social injustice if there is an imbalance in matters pertaining to anglophone Cameroon

6.3.3. Strengthening local governance

In societies where justice cannot be obtained through public institutions, groups are more likely to resort to violence to resolve grievances. State institutions and structures responsible for promoting justice and equity must hold accountable instigators of hate speeches and ethnic conflict both at individual or group levels. The slogan *come-no-go* is hate-speech intended to cause division between the anglophone people of the Northwest and Southwest Regions.

One of the reasons advanced for Northwest and Southwest antagonism in the 1990s that led to the coining of the divisive slogan *come-no-go* was Northwestern demographic dominance in the Southwest Region. The fact that Northwesterners dominated Anglophone Cameroon political scene for over three decades makes the demographic threat inevitable. Therefore, one of the ways to secure unity between the two regions is to solve the fear of Northwestern hegemony. The Cameroon government and Northwesterners themselves should acknowledge the dominance

and its threat in the socio-political, economic and religious domains and thus avoid any situation that would create the impression of a continued Northwest hegemony.

If key political, social and religious institutions in the Southwest Regions are in the hands or headed by Northwesterners while there are qualified Southwesterners, there is bound to be tension and conflict, amidst demographic dominance and threat from the Northwest. If commerce and economy of the Southwest Region is occupied by a number of Northwesterners, there is no reason why Southwesterners wouldn't be threatened. Should political stakeholders and Northwesterners fail to acknowledge that Northwestern demographic dominance is a threat in the Southwest Region which should therefore call for respect of indigenous people and cultures following the UN declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and should they not avoid situations and appointments particularly in the Southwest Region whether at political, socio-economic and religious levels (which continue to portray Northwestern hegemony), then Northwest and Southwest antagonism will be sustained, anglophone unity and solidarity will be difficult and restoration of anglophone statehood expressed in the anglophone crisis would just be another political deceitfulness.

6.3.4. Promoting Inclusive Regional Development

Also, for lasting peace, unity and cooperation between Anglophone Northwest and Southwest Regions, each of the regions is to acknowledge and accept the approach adopted by the other to resolve disputes. Northwesterners for example must never induce Southwesterners into accepting the argument of force as a means of expressing grievances and or settling problems. Similarly, Southwesterners must allow Northwesterners if they so desire to practice the argument of force in resolving their crisis. Yet, it is recommended that each approach be practiced in their respective region following their socio-cultural and political inclinations.

Again, we read that most people from the Grasslanders/Highland regions are by nature more resilient in pursuing their goals in the field of agriculture than Coastal/Foresters (Nkwi 2017). Probably because of the nature of their soil and topography, reason why the colonisers found Northwest Region a fertile area for forced labour migration (Nkwi 2017). While acknowledging this fact, it is no reason to think that Southwesterners are neither lazy and consumerists nor Northwesterners slaves to anyone (Nkwi 2017). Each have their natural endowment that must be acknowledged and respected if peace is to reign.

6.3.5. Encouraging inter-regional dialogue

An integral part of the process of achieving peace in conflict situation is the need to promote social solidarity. It is important to note that peace is not just the absence of violence, but the presence of social solidarity. Once social solidarity is achieved in any conflict situation, it means that members of the society have begun to recognise each other as fellow human beings and prepared to share concerns of common welfare and well-being of each other. Social solidarity makes sense because only by ensuring the security, safety and well-being of others can we hope to secure our own security, safety and well-being. To emphasise the need to foster social solidarity is to recognise the inter-connectedness of each human. It is only through promotion of social solidarity that anglophones can achieve lasting peace and development. Again, social solidarity would hardly be achieved if members overstate

differences among ethnic groups, and neglect beliefs and values that are shared across ethnic “lines.” To ignore the complexity of interethnic differences in conflict management is to encourage another form of labelling. Focusing on the differences, failure to deal with them within these groups, and the neglect of the similarities has the consequence of undermining common human characteristics and the influence of common legislature, language, socio-political and economic systems. It also undermines long shared social ties on interpersonal and group relations as the case of Anglophone Cameroon since colonial era. Anglophone Cameroonians should focus therefore on what binds them together as anglophones than that which separates them.

Without these measures, Anglophone unity will remain fragile.

Conclusion

The Northwest–Southwest divide in Anglophone Cameroon is a deeply rooted socio-political phenomenon shaped by a century of migration, colonial labor policies, land disputes, and elite manipulation. Although both regions share a common Anglo-Saxon heritage and a collective experience of marginalisation within a Francophone-dominated state, their internal relationship has been marked by competing claims to belonging and persistent anxieties about demographic and political dominance.

The *cam-no-go* discourse, far from being a mere insult, encapsulates the broader dynamics of autochthony and exclusion that have shaped inter-regional relations. It reflects fears of cultural erosion, economic displacement, and political marginalisation among indigenous Southwesterners, while reinforcing perceptions of stigmatisation and discrimination among Northwestern migrants. These narratives have been repeatedly instrumentalised by political elites seeking to consolidate regional power or weaken Anglophone unity.

The analysis demonstrates that the NW/SW divide is not an inevitable outcome of cultural difference but a socially constructed boundary maintained through historical grievances, structural inequalities, and political opportunism. The divide has significant implications for the Anglophone Crisis, undermining efforts to build a cohesive movement for self-determination and providing opportunities for the central government to exploit internal fractures.

Addressing this divide requires a multi-dimensional approach that acknowledges both the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of the conflict. Key steps include reforming land tenure systems, strengthening local governance, promoting equitable regional development, and fostering inter-regional dialogue. More importantly, Anglophone political actors must confront the paradox of their identity: unity against external domination cannot be achieved without addressing internal divisions.

Ultimately, the future of Anglophone Cameroon depends on the ability of its people to reconcile their shared history with their internal diversity. Only by confronting the politics of belonging and dismantling exclusionary narratives can the regions move toward a more inclusive and cohesive political future.

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